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Pattern of conferences

Report of the Fifth Committee

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I. Introduction

1. The previous recommendations made by the Fifth Committee to the General Assembly under agenda item 127 appear in the report of the Committee contained in document A/60/601.

2. The Fifth Committee resumed its consideration of the item at its 46th meeting, on 11 April 2006. Statements and observations made in the course of the Committee's consideration of the item are reflected in the relevant summary record (A/C.5/60/SR.46).

II. Consideration of draft resolution A/C.5/60/L.36

3. At its 46th meeting, on 11 April 2006, the Committee had before it a draft resolution entitled "Pattern of conferences" (A/C.5/60/L.36), which was submitted by the Chairman on the basis of informal consultations coordinated by the representative of Argentina.

4. At the same meeting, the Committee adopted draft resolution A/C.5/60/L.36 without a vote (see para. 5).

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III. Recommendation of the Fifth Committee

5. The Fifth Committee recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of the following draft resolution:

Pattern of conferences

The General Assembly,

Recalling its relevant resolutions, including resolutions 40/243 of 18 December 1985, 41/213 of 19 December 1986, 43/222 A to E of 21 December 1988, 51/211 A to E of 18 December 1996, 52/214 of 22 December 1997, 53/208 A to E of 18 December 1998, 54/248 of 23 December 1999, 55/222 of 23 December 2000, 56/242 of 24 December 2001, 56/254 D of 27 March 2002, 56/262 of 15 February 2002, 56/287 of 27 June 2002, 57/283 A of 20 December 2002, 57/283 B of 15 April 2003, 58/250 of 23 December 2003, 59/265 of 23 December 2004 and 60/236 of 23 December 2005,

Reaffirming its resolution 42/207 C of 11 December 1987, in which it requested the Secretary-General to ensure the equal treatment of the official languages of the United Nations,

Having considered the report of the Committee on Conferences,[1] the relevant reports of the Secretary-General[2] and the report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions,[3]

Reaffirming the provisions relevant to conference services of its resolutions on multilingualism,

I

Calendar of conferences and meetings

Takes note of the report of the Committee on Conferences for 2005,[1]

II

A. Utilization of conference-servicing resources

1. *Reaffirms* the practice that, in the use of conference rooms, priority must be given to the meetings of Member States;

2. *Requests* the Secretary-General, when preparing budget proposals for conference services, to ensure that the level of resources proposed for temporary assistance is commensurate with the full demand of services, estimated on the basis of current experience;

3. *Notes with satisfaction* that the overall utilization factor at the four main duty stations increased to 83 per cent in 2004 from 77 per cent in 2003, exceeding the benchmark for the first time since 2000;

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[1] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Sixtieth Session, Supplement No. 32* (A/60/32).

[2] A/60/93 and Corr.1 and A/60/112.

[3] A/60/433.

4. *Recognizes* the importance of the meetings of regional and other major groupings of Member States for the smooth functioning of the sessions of intergovernmental bodies, and requests the Secretary-General to ensure that, as far as possible, all requests for conference services for the meetings of regional and other major groupings of Member States are met;

5. *Notes with concern* the continued decrease in the percentage of meetings held by regional and other major groupings of Member States that were provided with interpretation services, at the four main duty stations, from 98 per cent during the period from May 2001 to April 2002, to 92 per cent during the period from May 2002 to April 2003, to 90 per cent during the period from May 2003 to April 2004, to 85 per cent during the period from May 2004 to April 2005, despite the fact that the number of meetings requesting the provision of interpretation noticeably decreased, by 15 per cent, during the period from May 2004 to April 2005;

6. *Recalls* that meetings held by regional and other major groupings of Member States are provided with interpretation services on an ad hoc basis, in accordance with established practice;

7. *Once again urges* intergovernmental bodies to spare no effort at the planning stage to take into account the meetings of regional and other major groupings of Member States, to make provision for such meetings in their programmes of work and to notify conference services, well in advance, of any cancellations so that unutilized conference-servicing resources may, to the extent possible, be reassigned to meetings of regional and other major groupings of Member States;

8. *Notes* that improvements in the utilization factor might entail a reduction in the availability of conference services for meetings of regional groups, and requests the Secretary-General to explore innovative ways to address this problem and to report to the General Assembly through the Committee on Conferences;

9. *Welcomes* the steps taken by those bodies that have adjusted their programmes of work in order to achieve the optimum utilization of conference-servicing resources, and requests the Committee on Conferences to continue consultations with the secretariats and bureaux of bodies that underutilize their conference-servicing resources, in line with what was requested by paragraph 2 of section II.A of its resolution 59/265;

10. *Recalls* its several resolutions, including resolution 59/265, section II.A, paragraph 8, reaffirms that, in conformity with the headquarters rule, all meetings of Nairobi-based United Nations bodies shall take place in Nairobi, except as otherwise authorized by the General Assembly or the Committee on Conferences acting on its behalf, and requests the Secretary-General to report on the subject to the Assembly at its sixty-first session through the Committee on Conferences;

11. *Strongly discourages* any invitation to host meetings that would violate the headquarters rule at the United Nations Office at Nairobi and at other United Nations centres with low utilization levels;

12. *Welcomes* the efforts undertaken so far to increase utilization of the conference facilities at the Economic Commission for Africa, in particular the introduction by the Commission of an integrated system for the management of its

conferences and the conducting of a fact-finding mission to identify best practices at similar conference centres within the United Nations system;

13. *Requests* the Secretary-General to continue his efforts to ensure that the conference centre at the Economic Commission for Africa establishes and develops linkages with other centres and bodies and to report thereon to the General Assembly at its sixty-first session through the Committee on Conferences;

14. *Notes* that the strict implementation of the headquarters minimum operating security standards has compelled the Economic Commission for Africa to restrict the utilization of its conference centre to organizations of the United Nations family, foreign representatives accredited to Addis Ababa, the African Union, recognized international non-governmental organizations and the Government of Ethiopia;

15. *Invites* the Secretary-General to explore means to increase the utilization of the conference centre of the Economic Commission for Africa, bearing in mind the headquarters minimum operating security standards, and to report thereon to the General Assembly at its sixty-first session, through the Committee on Conferences;

B. Reform of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management

1. *Reaffirms* that the Fifth Committee is the appropriate Main Committee of the General Assembly entrusted with responsibilities for administrative and budgetary matters;

2. *Also reaffirms* that the major goals of the reform of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management of the Secretariat are to provide high-quality documents in a timely manner in all official languages, as well as high-quality conference services to Member States at all duty stations, and to achieve those aims as efficiently and cost-effectively as possible, in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly;

3. *Notes* the ongoing efforts towards the attainment of integrated global management, recognizes the upgrading of the information technology capacity at the United Nations Office at Nairobi, which is essential for the successful achievement of integrated global management, and requests the Secretary-General to keep the General Assembly apprised of progress made in this regard;

4. *Also notes* the initial measures taken so far by the Department to seek the evaluation by Member States of the quality of the conference services provided to them as a key performance indicator of the Department, including through language-specific informational meetings twice a year, and requests the Secretary-General to ensure that such measures provide equal opportunities to Member States to present their evaluation in the six official languages of the United Nations and are in full compliance with relevant General Assembly resolutions;

5. *Welcomes* the progress achieved in the implementation of the Electronic Meetings Planning and Resource Allocation System (e-Meets) and the electronic documentation management concept (e-Doc);

6. *Notes* the ongoing efforts towards the establishment of the integrated global management system, and requests the Secretary-General to report to the

General Assembly at its sixty-first session on the outcome of the work of the task forces through the Committee on Conferences;

7. *Takes note* of the conclusions of the departmental task force on workload standards,[4] and requests the Secretary-General, while reviewing the issue of workload standards, which date from 1976, and performance measurement tools in the context of the introduction of applicable information technologies, to take fully into account the unique nature of the functions of the language services of the Department;

8. *Requests* the Secretary-General to further explore the issue of offering information technology-related training (including keyboarding) and building basic information technology skills requirements into vacancy announcements;

9. *Recalls* section II.B, paragraph 10, of its resolution 59/265, and in this regard looks forward to the submission of the proposal referred to in that paragraph;

10. *Reaffirms* section II.B, paragraph 10, of its resolution 57/283 B, and in that context stresses the importance of maintaining the official records editing function, as well as the importance of retaining the concordance principle in order to ensure equally valid texts of resolutions in all six official languages;

III

Documentation and publication-related matters

1. *Emphasizes* the paramount importance of the equality of the six official languages of the United Nations;

2. *Notes with concern* the continued high level of late submissions of documentation by author departments, which, in turn, negatively impact the functioning of intergovernmental bodies, and requests the Secretary-General to report to the General Assembly, at its sixty-first session, through the Committee on Conferences, on impediments, if any, to achieving full compliance with the 10-week and 6-week rules for the issuance of pre-session documents, including, where appropriate, proposed measures to address such impediments;

3. *Reiterates its request* to the Secretary-General to ensure that the rules concerning the simultaneous distribution of documents in all official languages are followed with respect to both the distribution of printed copies and the posting of parliamentary documentation on the Official Document System and the United Nations website, in keeping with section III, paragraph 5, of its resolution 55/222;

4. *Notes with concern* the non-compliance with rule 59 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, and requests the Secretary-General to ensure the communication of resolutions adopted by the Assembly to Member States within fifteen days after the closure of the session;

5. *Reaffirms* its decision in section III, paragraph 9, of its resolution 59/265, that the issuance of documents on planning, budgetary and administrative matters requiring urgent consideration by the General Assembly shall be accorded priority;

6. *Welcomes* the efforts of the interdepartmental task force on documentation in addressing the problem of late issuance of documentation, and

[4] See A/60/93 and Corr.1, paras. 60-62.

requests the Secretary-General to develop a clear accountability mechanism within the Secretariat for the submission, processing and issuance of documentation and to present a detailed report thereon to the Committee on Conferences for its further consideration and analysis, in order to provide concrete recommendations to the General Assembly at its sixty-first session;

7. *Reiterates its request* to the Secretary-General to direct all departments of the Secretariat to include the following elements in their reports:

(a) Summary of the report;

(b) Consolidated conclusions, recommendations and other proposed actions;

(c) Relevant background information;

8. *Encourages* intergovernmental and expert bodies to include the above-mentioned elements, where appropriate, in their reports to the General Assembly;

9. *Requests* that all documents submitted to legislative organs by the Secretariat, intergovernmental and expert bodies for consideration and action have conclusions and recommendations in bold print;

10. *Requests* the Secretary-General to continue to take steps to improve the quality and accuracy of meeting records in all six official languages through full reliance in the preparation and translation of those records on sound recordings and written texts of statements as they were delivered in the original languages;

11. *Notes* some improvement in the issuance of verbatim and summary records, while recognizing that delay in their issuance still exists;

12. *Requests* the Secretary-General to continue to take appropriate measures to ameliorate the delay in the issuance of verbatim and summary records, with a view to issuing them in a timely manner;

13. *Recalls* section II.B, paragraph 14, of its resolution 59/265, and reiterates its request to the Secretary-General to further elaborate on all options, including those set out in paragraphs 59 to 63 of his report on the reform of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management,[5] in accordance with legislative mandates, and to report on their practical and financial implications to the General Assembly at its sixty-first session through the Committee on Conferences;

14. *Recalls* section II.B, paragraph 13, of its resolution 59/265, and takes note of paragraphs 57 to 59 of the report of the Secretary-General,[6] and decides to revert to this issue in the context of its consideration of the report referred to in the paragraph above;

IV
Translation and interpretation-related matters

1. *Requests* the Secretary-General to ensure the highest quality of interpretation and translation services in all official languages;

2. *Reiterates its request* to the Secretary-General to make sure that terminology used in translation and interpretation services reflects the latest

[5] A/59/172.

[6] A/60/93 and Corr.1.

linguistic norms and terminology of the official languages in order to ensure the highest quality;

3. *Requests* the Secretary-General to continue to improve the accuracy of translation of documents into the official languages, giving particular significance to the quality of translation;

4. *Reiterates its request* to the Secretary-General, when recruiting temporary assistance in the language services, to ensure that all language services are given equal treatment and are provided with equally favourable working conditions and resources, with a view to achieving maximum quality of their services, with full respect for the specificities of the six official languages and taking into account their respective workloads;

5. *Also reiterates its request* to the Secretary-General to address the question of the appropriate level of self-revision that is consistent with quality in all official languages and to report thereon to the General Assembly at its sixty-first session;

6. *Notes with concern* the disparities in interpretation and translation vacancy rates between the United Nations Office at Nairobi and other duty stations;

7. *Expresses deep concern* with the high vacancy rates in the interpretation and translation services at the United Nations Office at Nairobi, especially the chronic difficulty in staffing the Arabic Interpretation Unit, and requests the Secretary-General to address this through, inter alia, assistance from Member States in advertising and facilitating the conduct of competitive examinations to fill these language vacancies;

8. *Requests* the Secretary-General to address the problem of succession planning in order to fill emerging vacancies in language services in a timely manner through outreach to eligible applicants;

9. *Reiterates its request* that the Secretary-General continue efforts to explore the use of new technologies, such as computer-assisted translation, remote and off-site translation and speech recognition, in the six official languages, in order to further enhance the quality and productivity of the conference services, and to keep the General Assembly informed of the introduction of any other new technology;

V
Information technology

1. *Notes with appreciation* the progress achieved across duty stations in integrating information technology into meetings management and documentation-processing systems and the global approach to sharing standards, good practices and technological achievements among conference services at all duty stations;

2. *Requests* the Secretary-General to ensure the compatibility of technologies used in all duty stations and to ensure that they are user-friendly in all official languages;

3. *Also requests* the Secretary-General to complete the task of uploading all important older United Nations documents onto the United Nations website in all

six official languages on a priority basis, so that these archives are also available to Member States through that medium;

4. *Welcomes* the strengthening of the Information Technology Unit at the United Nations Office at Nairobi, and requests the Secretary-General to continue to address the issue of maintaining parity among duty stations in terms of information technology capacity.